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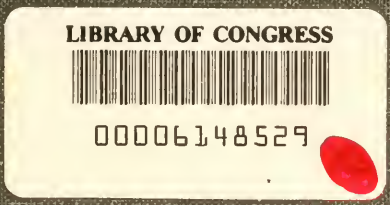

The Times, and Signs of the Times.

BACCALAUREATE SERMON,

TO THE

GRADUATING CLASS

OF

WASHINGTON COLLEGE,

AUGUST 31, 1862,

BY JOHN W. SCOTT, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE.

WASHINGTON, PA.:
PRINTED AT THE REPORTER AND TRIBUNE OFFICE.
1862.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

WASHINGTON, PA., October 13, 1862.

JOHN W. SCOTT, D. D.:

Dear Sir:—The undersigned having heard, with the highest gratification, the able Sermon delivered by you to the late Graduating Class of Washington College, and believing that a still wider diffusion of the sentiments of Christian Patriotism contained therein would be productive of good, would most respectfully solicit a copy for publication.

We remain, with the highest esteem,

Your obedient servants,

C. M. REED,
SAML. CUNNINGHAM,
A. W. ACHESON,
JOHN S. BRADY,
JAMES ARMSTRONG,
JOSEPH HENDERSON,
V. HARDING,
JACOB SLAGLE,
THOS. M'KEAN.

WASHINGTON, PA., October 14, 1862.

MESSRS. C. M. REED, S. CUNNINGHAM, A. W. ACHESON, JOHN S. BRADY, JAMES ARMSTRONG, and others:

Gentlemen:—The manuscript of the Sermon which you request for publication is herewith placed at your disposal. This is done with the more readiness:

1. Because the Sermon referred to has, perhaps, been misapprehended; certainly, it has been very grossly misrepresented.

2. Because, while *the Press* justly claims freedom of opinion, and the free expression of it, some public papers seem to forget that *the Pulpit* is equally entitled to a free expression of opinion—to say nothing of the minister's duty "not to shun to declare all the counsel of God," without fear or favor, as *he himself* understands it; not as some bigoted political partizan, whose piety is somewhat occasional, and rather spasmodic even then, would officiously understand it for him. Like the angel at the pool of Bethesda, the faithful minister must go down *at the proper season*, and trouble the water, or there will *always* be around him "a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered," whose infirmities will remain unhealed.

3. Because the subject of American Slavery, though a political question in the wide and *proper* sense of politics—a sense which connects it with the problem of our national existence, and therefore makes it equally the concern of *all* political parties—is *essentially* a moral and religious question, and only *incidentally* connected with *party* politics. It is therefore evidently *wrong* to ignore this sub-

ject in the pulpit, because of the outcry against political preaching raised by unprincipled demagogues and unreasoning partisans. The keeping out of the pulpit subjects so essentially connected with the moral and political life of the nation, and with the peace, unity and religious life of the church as the subject of slavery, is a most cunning device of Satan, which has already wrought unspeakable evil. This ignoring of slavery because merely *incidentally* connected with party politics, though *essentially* connected with the morals, religion and very life of the nation, is going even beyond the demands of Satan's own rule of taking an ell when allowed an inch. This is permitting him to take *the substance*, when he has merely *the accident*, and has THAT, only on the monstrous assumption that the politics of nations are under his peculiar care and administration.

The author of this Sermon fully believes in rebuking the impudence of Satan herein, and in speaking out for the honor of Him whose *right* it is to rule, by causing the principles of his religion to pervade the affairs of all nations, their politics included, and thus to be really the salt of the earth. The author believes in speaking out for the honor of "Christ's Crown and Kingdom," even in the pulpits of *Christ's own house;* believes in instructing the people in "all the counsel of God," however it may fare with partisan political platforms of whatever name, or with those who can see nothing in politics higher, better, nobler than the triumph of party with its accompanying spoils.

Entire originality is not to be expected in a discussion of Slavery at this day, except in the method of presenting it. That is pretty much all that is claimed for the following discourse, which is here presented just as it was preached, except what is added in a short appendix.

I remain, gentlemen, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

J. W. SCOTT.

BACCALAUREATE SERMON.

1 Chron. 12: 32. "Which were men that had understanding of the times."

Matt. 16: 3. "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

In both these passages "the times" is used in the same sense as in common discourse. The phrase denotes "the state of things at a particurar period." It is sometimes used in a limited sense, denoting the state of a particular class of things, for example, the condition, or the effects of the condition of agricultural, commercial, political, or religious affairs, during a particular season. More frequently, perhaps, it is used in a wider sense, denoting the effect of the combined influence of all classes of things, physical, moral, religious, social, as exhibited at any particular period—during any particular season.

Men often think and speak loosely concerning the times, as if the times made themselves. But do things get into this or the other particular state of their own accord? Especially, do different classes of things combine to produce a definite result, without the direction of an overruling power? No: the times are but clock-faces, showing the results of a power working within. They are but indexes of God's government of the world.

By "the signs of the times" is meant something which indicates a coming change in the governmental conduct of affairs—a change more or less extended in its effects, embracing the affairs of the individual, the family, the neighborhood, the state, nation, world.

There *are* signs in the moral and social heavens, as in the physical. *There*, also, the appearance of the sky forebodes fair weather or foul. Nor let it be forgotten, that changes are brought about by causes operating as definitely and uniformly in the moral as in the physical world. In the physical, changes are indicated by *signs*, which the observant and wise understand, and which lead them to prepare for the coming storm; while the simple and inconsiderate heed not, see not, till the lightnings are gleaming, the thunders

roaring, and the rains descending around them. So, on the other hand, the observant and wise can see indications of returning fair weather, and are prepared to take advantage of it immediately; while the unwary let many such precious opportunities pass unimproved.

The same difference of conduct is observable in reference to changes in the times.

The first passage in the text commends the men of Issachar, because of their understanding of the times. Doubtless they had been intelligent observers of the signs of the times. A change had been going on in the government of the country. The power was being transferred, according to God's purpose previously declared, from the house of Saul to that of David. Second causes were employed, as always, except when God works miraculously, adequate to the securing of the result immediate. These men of Issachar observed these causes at work, understood them, and were consequently prepared to fall in with the course indicated by God's providence.

In the second passage the Pharisees and Sadducees are censured for not observing the signs of the times, and consequently not being prepared to follow the leadings of Providence. They were wedded to their old world notions: blinded by prejudice: deaf even to the calls of God: and were consequently crushed by the advancing wheels of heaven-directed civil and religious progress.

Such occasions not unfrequently occur in God's dealings with the nations. Our own nation is passing through such a change of the times now.

In view of this fact I have thought it not inappropriate to call the attention of the graduating class, even on this interesting and solemn occasion, to "The Times, and Signs of the Times," in our own land and nation. I would that you, young gentlemen, should go forth from this quiet literary retreat, men who shall be acknowledged among your fellows as having understanding of the times, and men who can discern the signs of the times.

Keeping these ends in view, the text would naturally lead us to a consideration of what is implied in an understanding of the times, and of some of the particulars indicated by the signs of the times in our own country.

Were this order followed, we would find that an understanding of the times has implied in it both a knowledge of the causes

which have led to the present evil times, and a knowledge of the proper means for removing the evils of the times. Here, without noticing the signs of the times at all, would be matter for a volume instead of a sermon.

I must, of necessity, therefore, keep within a narrower circle than this. In these circumstances, I know of no better course than to select one of the prominent elements of the times—of the state of things—as they now exist in our distracted country, and confine your attention to that.

The most prominent cause of the present state of things in our land, in my view, is *American Slavery*. If you understand its nature and its practical effects upon our national affairs, you will, in a good degree, have an understanding of the times. And if you can trace the shadows which coming events are casting before, in connection with this one subject, you may be said, in a good degree, to discern the signs of the times, as these are now exhibited by the God of nations upon the face of our national sky.

For these reasons I propose to confine your attention, on the present occasion, to a consideration of THE NATURE OF SLAVERY; ITS INFLUENCE IN BRINGING ABOUT THE PRESENT EVIL TIMES IN OUR BELOVED COUNTRY; AND SOME OF THE INDICATIONS OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE RESPECTING IT.

I. THE NATURE OF SLAVERY.

This may be considered from different points of view. Let us look at the subject, in a summary way, in its *moral*, *political* and *social* relations.

1. What is the nature of Slavery, *morally* considered? Is it right or wrong, good or evil?

First. A full answer to these questions would give us a PHILOSOPHY OF SLAVERY. And were I about to present such a philosophy, I would first postulate the unity of the human race, or in other words, the moral agency of negroes; and also the inspiration and consequent divine authority of the Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice. I would then discuss and settle the principles on which the following propositions might be securely based:

PROP. FIRST: *The Freedom is the normal state of every moral agent.* This would be argued from the moral and moral constitution of such agents, and the utter absurdity, in a community of holy beings of one such agent controlling and subjecting to *his* will, the

physical, mental and moral faculties of another—his peer—the same in nature with himself. For example, you cannot possibly conceive, save in the way of a wild and idle fancy, of Gabriel *owning* one hundred or one thousand of his fellow angels, and converting his trumpet into an overseer's horn. Nor, though informed that Michael, the archangel, did at least once contend even with the devil, disputing about the body of Moses, can you think of *him* as engaged in dispute with some slavedriving angel, and higgling about the price of a fellow angel. Such a state of things, to say nothing of escapes and pursuits, of stripes and groans and tears—as existing "up yonder," where the cry "holy! holy! holy! is the Lord of Hosts!" is constantly heard, both near at hand and afar off, resounding throughout all the land, is utterly *unthinkable.*

PROP. SECOND: *That human Slavery is the result of the fall and consequent depravity of man, in common with other social evils.*

PROP. THIRD: *That although Slavery is an evil, it may exist under such circumstances, that the toleration of its existence for the time being, is a less evil than the removal of it, just then, would be; and that such toleration is consequently justifiable* IN SUCH CASES.

Herein I would differ radically from our Abolition friends. I look upon them, in common with other extremists, as involved in great error. They may mean well. No doubt many of them are very conscientious. But they fall into the fallacy which leads to all kinds of fanaticism, of *reasoning from the abstract to the concrete;* of concluding that what is right or wrong in the abstract, is right or wrong also in the concrete. They forget that the very same act is right or wrong according to the circumstances under which, and the intention with which it is performed.

PROP. FOURTH: *That nevertheless, though the* IMMEDIATE *removal of Slavery may not always be a duty, yet its* ULTIMATE *removal is always to be kept in view as a solemn duty, incumbent upon all parties in any way connected with it.*"

It is here implied that slavery is to be tolerated only so long as slaveholding is continued from motives of benevolence to the slave himself; for instance, until he can be placed beyond the reach of unjust laws, or until he can be properly educated for freedom. In entire accordance with these views of the teachings of the Philosophy of Slavery, are the deliverances respecting the nature of Slavery made by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. Indeed, I know not how better to express my own views of this

subject, than by quoting from the deliverance of 1818. "We consider the voluntary enslaving of one portion of the human race by another as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the law of God, * * and as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the Gospel of Christ. * * Slavery creates a paradox in the moral system: it exhibits rational, accountable and immortal beings in such circumstances as scarcely to leave them the power of moral action." This is illustrated at some length by a specification of particulars. The evil consequences of slavery are pointed out with great force, and are said not to be "imaginary, but to connect themselves with its very existence."

Yet the Assembly adds: "We do indeed tenderly sympathize with those portions of our church and our country where the evil of slavery has been entailed upon them. * * At the same time we earnestly exhort them to continue, and if possible, to increase their exertions to effect a total abolition of slavery. We exhort them to suffer no greater delay to take place in this most interesting concern, than a regard for the public welfare truly and indispensably demands."

An examination of the Scripture doctrine on this subject would lead to the same conclusion with that reached by the Assembly. The Assembly, indeed, professedly derives its doctrines on this subject, as on other subjects, from the teachings of Scripture.* Slavery is nowhere commended in the Scriptures; is tolerated, however, for the time being; the duties of both masters and slaves are laid down as to be observed where and while it exists; yet at the same time such principles are inculcated as tend to its entire removal.

He, then, who would act consistently with the dictates of right reason; with the dictates of an enlightened conscience: with the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church, and with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures; he who would avoid that which is determined to be a moral wrong, in the light of all these authorities, will never hold a slave except so long as may be for the slave's own good; will never hold a slave because he is his *property;* hold him from motives of mere self-interest; hold him or sell him for gain.

Second. The ORIGIN of Slavery also shows it to be morally wrong.

* See Appendix A.

As we have seen, it is incidental to our fallen and depraved condition, like other evils. It could never have *begun* to exist without injustice and oppression—without the violation of inalienable rights, the highest and dearest rights of man as an intellectual and moral being. As for American Slavery, by what right does any man hold a slave in this "land of the free?" By the law of the State, you will say. Where did the State get the right to give you the privilege of violating the moral constitution, interwoven with man's nature by his Creator, and of violating the moral code of the universe? Such law of the State is clearly *unconstitutional*,* that is, if negroes have the same mental and moral constitution with other men, as is postulated in this discourse; it is a sheer usurpation. But in fact there is no law in any of our States *establishing* Slavery. This is asserted and insisted on by the friends of slavery themselves. We must look farther for the origin of American Slavery. It is derived from the western coast of benighted and heathen Africa. There, as we are informed by Chief Justice Marshall, the right is claimed, though it is discarded by all Christendom, of enslaving captives taken in war.

To *this* origin is American Slavery traced even by the courts in the Slave States themselves. The Supreme Court of Georgia says: "Licensed to hold slave property, the Georgia planter held the slave as a chattel; either directly from the slave trader, or from those who held under him, and he from the slave-captor in Africa. The property of the planter in the slave became, thus, the property of the original captor." (Georgia Reports, p. 555, as quoted in Sumner's Barbarism of Slavery.)

American Slavery is, therefore, clearly *wrong* as to its ORIGIN.

Third. The laws regulating Slavery show that it is morally wrong.

Quotations might be given from the civil codes of different Slave States, did time permit. Judge Stroud sums up the matter thus: "The cardinal principle of slavery—that the slave is not to be ranked among *sentient* beings, but among *things*—is an article of property, a chattel personal—obtains as undoubted law in all of the [Slave] States." (Stroud's Law of Slavery, p. 22, as quoted by Sumner.)

Now look at the relation which is thus established. In the graphic words of Senator Sumner, "The slave is held simply *for the use of his master*, to whose behests his life, liberty and happi-

* See Appendix B.

ness are devoted, and by whom he may be bartered, leased, mortgaged, bequeathed, invoiced, shipped as cargo, stored as goods, sold on execution, knocked off at public auction, and even staked at the gaming table, on the hazard of a card or a die; all according to law. Nor is there anything within the limit of life, inflicted on a beast, which may not be inflicted on the slave. He may be marked like a hog, branded like a mule, yoked like an ox, hobbled like a horse, driven like an ass, sheared like a sheep, maimed like a cur, and constantly beaten like a brute; all according to law." (Barbarism of Slavery, p. 4.)

The slave laws, as this orator also shows, besides upholding the claim of property in man, which claim originated in savage Africa, as we have seen, abrogates the marriage contract and the parental relation, closes the gates of knowledge to the slave, and appropriates all his toil. On these particulars I cannot dwell. Not many words are needed to show that a system which requires *such* laws for its maintenance, is necessarily and evidently wrong.

Let this suffice for the moral aspect of Slavery. Its philosophy, its origin, its laws, besides the deliverances of Christian Churches, and the teachings of the Scriptures, shew that it is morally wrong.

2. *The political relations of Slavery.*

In considering the nature of Slavery, we come next, in accordance with our plan, to its political relations. Here would be the place to exhibit the influence of slavery on the growth of population; on the value of property; on agriculture, commerce and manufactures; on internal improvements: and on educational and religious institutions. A comparison of the Slave States with the Free would afford abundant materials for illustrating this part of the subject, and shewing that slavery is a great *political* as well as moral evil.

But I pass this as unsuited to the day, and proceed to consider:

3. *The social relations of Slavery.*

Slavery, in this aspect of it, affects both the dominant and the enslaved race.

First. As to the enslaved race, Homer long since put forth in lofty song, what all succeeding ages have confirmed: "The day that makes a man a slave, takes away half his worth." The slave is degraded below the natural level of humanity. He neither regards himself, nor is regarded by others, as possessing the dignity, the privileges, the means of securing happiness, the motives, the

aspirations, the hopes, which pertain to him who is really a man. He is lowered, to what dreadful depths of degradation none can tell, in all the best powers of his nature. His intellect is dwarfed; his sensibilities are mangled and torn; his will is annihilated, as far as possible; and his moral powers are blunted and perverted.

Second. As to the dominant race. Slavery affects society in all its forms—affects the family, the church, the State—imparts a peculiar type to civilization. But without further remarks on this, I shall merely quote the language of Mr. Jefferson, whose remarkable testimony, however, touches upon slavery in its moral and political, as well as social relations. It may be remarked in passing, that there are such enormities and abominations connected with slavery in its social developments, as cannot even be named in an assembly like this.

In his Notes on Virginia, Mr. Jefferson says:* "The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submission on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. If a parent could find no motive either in his philanthropy or his self-love for restraining the intemperance of passion toward his slave, it should always be a sufficient one that his child is present. But generally it is not sufficient. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose rein to the worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by its odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his morals and manners undepraved by such circumstances. And with what execration should a statesman be loaded, who, permitting one-half of the citizens to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one, and the *amor patriæ* of the other! And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure, when we have removed their only firm basis—a conviction in the minds of the people that their liberties are the gift of God, that they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever; * * that an exchange of situation is among possible events;

* See Appendix C.

that it may become probable by supernatural interference![1] The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest."

Oh! that all pastors and statesmen, all politicians and Christians had possessed such an understanding of the times and such a clear discernment of the signs of the times as Mr. Jefferson! How different would our condition and duties have been this day!

This brings me to consider:

II. THE INFLUENCE OF SLAVERY ON RELIGION, AND THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

This influence has been put forth in various ways:

1. Through its unfavorable effects upon the character of the dominant race.

First. It has perverted and impaired their moral sense.

As a specimen of this effect of slavery may be adduced the changed views of slavery. A great change for the worse in this respect has taken place within late years in the South, both in church and State; a sad change from the earlier sentiments of the Southern fathers,—a reaction against abolition doctrines, it is said; but this is a poor excuse. Thirty years ago the system of slavery was regarded as an anomaly, a temporary, unavoidable evil; a governmental necessity to be the sooner done away. Its removal was regarded by leading minds in all parts of the country as only a question of time.

Now it is declared as a good thing in itself—the very corner stone of Southern independence and permanent civil glory! (Speech of Hon. A. H. Stephens at Savannah, March 21, 1861),—a divine trust, its preservation and perpetuation as a sacred duty, a duty on the part of the South! (Dr. Palmer's Thanksgiving Sermon, November 29, 1860.)

The removal of slavery now is regarded as the removal of so much property. As to soul, human well-being, the slave is regarded in the same light as the horse and the ox.

As another specimen of the demoralizing effect of slavery may be adduced the conduct of the South at the out-breaking of the present war—the treachery, broken promises, perjuries, robbery, fiendish cruelty, and violations of moral obligation in almost all

[1] See Appendix B.

possible ways, including treason, which were then, and have since been, exhibited on such a gigantic scale.

Second. Slavery has also unfavorably affected the Southern character in other respects. It has rendered the dominant race haughty, selfish, self-important, boastful, vain-glorious, impatient of opposition, and of the restraint of wholesome laws. Their own will becomes to them both law and gospel. The character thus hinted at rather than described, has long shown itself in both church and state, as well as in social life. Hence *rebellion*, when their wishes were thwarted in the conduct of national affairs, with volcanic outbursts of evil principles and fiendish passions.

2. *By dividing the different Churches into North and South.*

What disputings did this subject of slavery cause in the various Christian denominations! What angry debates among Christian brethren, and final partings in anger! Strand after strand of the great ecclesiastical bond of union between the North and the South gave way. The seeds of discord, strife and war were widely scattered, in connection with these church difficulties, in both sections of the country.

3. *By developing the importance and magnitude of the Cotton interest.*

This, in turn, enhanced beyond all precedent, the value of slave property, inspired the desire for the re-opening of the foreign slave trade, and for new tracts of fertile land. Hence, dreams of fabulous wealth; of the acquisition or conquest of foreign territory; of a separate government, to be suited to the demands of the cotton interest; and of all nations being held tributary to the aggrandizement, and submissive to the demands of the new empire by their self-interest—that is, by their need of Cotton. However visionary all this may seem to us, such views prompted many leading minds in the South to plot disunion for a quarter of a century past, and have aided powerfully in bringing on war to secure disunion.

4. *By prompting to the demand of peculiar privileges in the administration of the General Government.*

Such demands were long, perseveringly and most offensively put forth. Privileges, commercial and territorial, with special statute provisions for the protection and benefit of slavery, were insisted on. These demands were long submitted to for the sake of union and peace; were submitted to even to the verge of servility; submitted to until the North was despised in the eyes of those

making these demands, as mean-spirited and craven; submitted to until they became absolutely intolerable in their haughtiness, arrogance and offensiveness; and the war is now shewing of what manner of spirit the North *is*, when peaceful thoughts are laid aside.

5. *By becoming an element of political power.*

In this respect its influence was exerted in a two-fold way.

First. It gave political power to *the slaveholding section, as such.* This it did by the slave representation in Congress; by over-riding all other issues, and making that section a unit in political action. It thus gave the South often a controlling influence in elections; gave it the balance of power, and caused its co-operation to be courted as a matter of the utmost importance in all party movements.

Second. It became an occasion of political advancement to individuals, in both sections of the country. In some portions of the North, he who could talk most and loudest against slavery, became a great man at once—the man for the times. He must be sent to the Legislature or to Congress, no matter what were his qualifications in other respects, or what his moral character. In all parts of the South, he who could abuse the abolitionists most effectually; could rail most vociferously against all anti-slavery sentiments and movements as so many grievous impositions on southern rights, also became a great man at once—the very man for the times. Thus agitation by unprincipled demagogues became the order of the day, and the southern heart was fired. Ah me! what streams of blood have been required, and will yet be required, to put out that unholy fire of the Southern heart!

6. *By promoting political corruption.*

I do not mean to say there has been no political corruption at the North. Alas! alas! party, party, instead of principle, has been everywhere! The most unscrupulous means have been used to secure party ends. How often have the worst instead of the best men been promoted by party management, and *for special party ends.* Hence, bribery, the most unblushing bargain and sale in our legislative and judicial halls!

But slavery is the most potent ingredient in the seething caldron of national corruption, giving out more deadly qualities, as it boils and bubbles in the heated mass, than witch's caldron ever knew; and "making the hell-broth slab and good."

I cannot now wait to illustrate this statement, except by referring to what has already been said about the moral, political and social effects of slavery.

7. *By giving rise to a false theory of our Government.*

The Declaration of our national independence gave existence to *one*, not to many nations. None of the colonies possessed the essential elements of nationality in its separate capacity, and therefore none of them asserted its own separate sovereignty. As the *United States*, the Colonies first claimed separate nationality, and as such were recognized by the mother country, and by all other nations. This nationality was not even achieved through the action of Colonial or State Governments as such, "but through that of a Congress of delegates appointed by the people's conventions and assemblies, in the name and by the authority of the good people of these colonies." The powers of sovereignty, therefore, resided in the United people of all the colonies *as one people or nation*, not in the separate State governments; resided in the revolutionary government, that is, in Congress, first; afterwards in the government existing under the Articles of Confederation, except so far as *usurped* on the part of the several States; and finally in the government inaugurated under our present national Constitution.

With this view agree the words of Mr. Madison: "The States never possessed the essential rights of sovereignty. * * they are only political societies. * * the sovereign powers were always vested in Congress." (As quoted by the Princeton Review, Oct. 1861, p. 615.)

The Confederation was the result of *usurpation* on the part of the States, acquiesced in for the time, but soon became a failure so gross and palpable, that even the usurped rights of sovereign power, sweet as sovereign power is, were gladly relinquished by the States for the sake of securing "a firm national government." The circumstances under which our present Constitution was formed clearly show that it was the deliberate intention to eliminate the element of State sovereignty, which had been usurped under the Articles of Confederation, and to substitute in its place the element of one nationality, proceeding from "the people of the United States," as one people, constituting one nation. The history of the times, embracing resolutions passed by State Legislatures and by Congress, prove the correctness of this view beyond question.

The false theory of our national government to which I refer, is the reviving of the old idea of a Confederation of sovereign States; a mere compact of co-equal sovereigns, dissoluble at pleasure. Mr. Calhoun was prominent in putting forth this doctrine. In his time is was connected with questions of commerce, and failed—failed, perhaps, because Daniel Webster was in the Senate, and Andrew Jackson was President of the United States. Mr. Calhoun himself is said to have suggested the necessity of connecting it with the slavery question, in order to unite the South in its reception. It has been so connected: the South has been united in its reception, and the results are now upon us.

In our last General Assembly I heard a venerable minister speak of the logical fallacy involved in this false theory. He regarded it as the origin of the war. The Demon of Logic was regarded as the chief agent in this fearful work. The Demon of Logic *has*, no doubt, played a conspicuous, yet only a subordinate part. The Demon of Slavery is the *Master* Demon, having under him many agents: saying to the Demon of Logic go, and he goeth: and to the Demon of Rhetoric come, and he cometh: and to the eloquent orator do this, and he doeth it. And thus a false theory of governments has become the very culmination of the influence of slavery upon "the times:" has become the immediate cause of the war.

III. Some of the indications of God's providence respecting American Slavery.

Time will not permit an elaboration of this part of the subject. The results indicated may be expressed in a general way thus: *That Africa in America is about to cease; and America in Africa to begin.*

1. "Signs" of both these results may be seen in providential arrangements in both countries.

In America, many things indicate an approaching *exodus* of the colored race, as if the end of their mission hither was almost accomplished.

In Africa, a wide field is opened up not only for their welcome reception, when forced away from this land, but for a great and glorious mission of usefulness.

Not needed here, they are needed there. An element of disunion and weakness here, they will be an element of union and

strength there. Discouraged and hindered in all their efforts to rise to an equality of privilege, or even to the proper level of *men* here, a wide and effectual door is opened to them there. Hayti and Central America may be talked of and tried on a small scale, but I doubt not that Africa will be found the heaven-appointed home for her own American descendants.

What a sublime instance it will be of the manner in which God brings good out of evil! What a magnificent display of the truth that God "who has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." (Acts 17: 26.) The times appointed before seem to be drawing near. The night of bondage in "the land of the free," is well nigh spent. The day of deliverance is dawning.

2. That slavery in this country is doomed, is indicated also by the determination of the North to maintain the unity of our nationality at every sacrifice and at all hazards.

3. By the infatuation of the South in casting away the real protection secured to slavery by the national Constitution in the Slave States, and grasping after additional protection against infringements of their constitutional rights—infringements remote, contingent, merely possible, in great measure imaginary. The fable of the dog that lost the piece of meat which he was carrying across a stream, is applicable to their case, with terrible significance. The emblem of our national freedom—our glorious eagle—shall not much longer be subjected to the incongruous, humiliating, ignominious task of spreading the protection of his mighty wings over a system so fraught with oppression, sin and shame. The union as it was is fast becoming as a dream when one awaketh out of sleep.* How we could have slept so long on the crumbling brink of such a smoking, heaving, hissing volcano, is utterly amazing!

4. By the utter alienation and intense hatred existing so generally in the South against the North. This coupled with the determination of the North to maintain unity of nationality, renders a breaking up of the peculiar form of society superinduced by the slave system in the South, not only probable, but apparently necessary to permanent union and peace between the two sections.

5. By the failure of the conservative mode of carrying on the war heretofore pursued. It seems now to be an admitted fact, that

* See Appendix E.

the policy heretofore pursued, to give it the softest name, has been a mistaken policy. As one has forcibly said, it has been "an attempt to unite impossibilities; to make war and keep the peace; to strike hard and not hurt; to invade sovereign States, and not meddle with their sovereignty; to put down rebellion and not meddle with its cause; to bring an infuriated people into enforced union with their enemies; and to leave all their causes of quarrel unsettled and vigorous, and yet hope for future concord." (N. Y Independent, August, 1862.)

This policy is to be abandoned as fatuous, absurd, and in the present posture of affairs savoring no little of stark lunacy.

A stringent, trenchant, effective policy in carrying on the war being adopted, the alienation and bitter hate in the South will, if possible, be increased, and will undoubtedly be extended to many so-called union men there; war will become WAR; and in the terrible struggle, slavery, even if let alone, will spontaneously abolish itself. God grant that it may be removed without the horrors of a servile insurrection!

I am free to say farther, that I cannot see with those who think that allowing the slaves of rebels to co-operate in putting down this atrocious rebellion—even arming them, when, where, and in such numbers as a sound discretion might dictate—would tend towards such a dreadful result. The tendency, in my view, *is just the other way*. Allow them the privilege, under military discipline and restraint, of helping in this war, and thereby securing their own freedom, and you open a safety valve—it may be the only safety valve practicable in the circumstances in which we are yet likely to be placed—to prevent an explosion of the indiscriminate and terrible vengeance of an oppressed and ignorant race.*

I say again, may God in his mercy bring about a removal of slavery without a servile insurrection!

YOUNG GENTLEMEN OF THE GRADUATING CLASS:

To aid in enabling you to understand the times, and to discern the signs of the times, I have thus placed before you, as I have been able, the main element in the production of the present evil times in our beloved country. May you understand the times aright, and act your several parts accordingly. May you perform your duties, when you go forth into the

* See Appendix F.

world, as well as you have done in College. For I here bear testimony that as a Class, your conduct, diligence and success have given unusual satisfaction to all your instructors. Our intercourse has been pleasant. The memory of it will linger long around those college halls, and often come sweeping over our spirits as we sit in the familiar class room, which you so long and so well adorned, like the sweet yet plaintive strains of an Æolian harp. You will be missed, young gentlemen, I am free to say—missed in many ways—in none more than in the moral and religious influence which, as a class, you have always exerted in the College. Twenty-two, out of the thirty members of your class, have been witness-bearers for Christ; and others of you soon will be, I confidently trust. We send you forth, therefore, with cheerful hopes for the future, as well as with pleasant memories of the past.

Our work of instruction, as to you, is now ended. Soon will you be separated from us and from one another. Your ranks are already thinned by the call of our country. The life-long separation has already begun. But though we be separated from one another, and shall soon be separated from all earthly things, may it be found "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom, 8: 38–39.)

APPENDIX.

NOTE A. PAGE 9.

This seems to me a much stronger form of the *Scripture* argument than mere quoting of Scripture texts, with comments thereon by the individual speaker. We have here, in brief space, *the result* of a careful and critical examination of texts of Scripture applicable to the question on hand, reached not only by the individual, but by the collected wisdom of the Presbyterian Church, as represented in her General Assembly.

NOTE B. PAGE 10.

The meaning of the author here has been misapprehended by some. This is a mere play upon the word unconstitutional—*a pun*, in short, and nothing more. It does not imply that the author believes in the higher law doctrine as that is generally understood. He does not so believe, as is evident from other parts even of this sermon; for example, where he speaks of "the South casting away the real protection secured to slavery by the national constitution," &c. (page 18.) A law may be *unjust*, yet constitutionally in force; and in such case must be obeyed, or the penalty of it suffered, until it be constitutionally repealed.

NOTE C. PAGE 12.

Mr. Jefferson being "the Father of American Democracy," this quotation must afford peculiar satisfaction to our democratic friends. Doubtless the editors of that party will be eager to transfer it bodily to their columns, and so give their readers the opportunity of *knowing* and admiring the noble sentiments of their great political ancestor. This would be so good a work, that we might expect it to be followed up by their making similar quotations from Washington, Jefferson, Franklin and others of the revolutionary fathers. The people, thus enlightened and instructed, would be all the more zealous and earnest for preserving the Union as it was expected and "meant to be" by these venerated patriots.

NOTE D. PAGE 13.

In the Appendix to the Sermon of the Rev. Dr. R. L. Stanton, delivered at Chillicothe, Ohio, September 26th, 1861, the day appointed by the President of the United States for fasting, humiliation and prayer, I find abundant proof of the charge here alledged. (pp.42–44, and also p. 47.)

Dr. Stanton brings forward historical evidence to prove these two points among others, viz:

1. "That to prevent the further introduction of African slaves, to prohibit the

further extension of the system of slavery, and even to secure its final abolition, were prominent objects of the Revolution which established our national independence."

2. "That all the leading men of that day, with very rare exceptions, agreed in these views and objects."

He quotes from the "American Archives" in proof of these points. I transfer the following as a specimen, showing the sentiment which prevailed among the fathers, south as well as north.

The Articles of Association, formed by "the delegates from the various Colonies met in Congress in Philadelphia, were adopted *unanimously*," yet contain the following language:

"That we will neither import nor purchase any slave imported after the first day of December next, after which time we will wholly discontinue the slave trade, and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will we hire our vessels, nor sell our commodities and manufactures to those who are concerned in it."

"And we do further agree and resolve that we will have no trade, commerce, dealings or intercourse whatever with any colony or province in North America, which will not accede to, or which shall hereafter violate this Association, but will hold them as *unworthy of the rights of freemen, and as inimical to the liberties of this country.*"

Georgia alone was not represented in that Congress. The people of that Colony, however, met in convention January 12th, 1775, and adopted the following resolution. It will be seen how the corner-stone of empire, laid by the Hon. A. H. Stephens, of Savannah, Georgia, March 21st, 1861, was regarded by the Georgia *fathers:*

"To show to the world that we are not influenced by any contracted or interested motives, but a general philanthrophy for *all mankind, of whatever climate, language or complexion*, we do hereby declare our disapprobation and *abhorrence* of the *unnatural practice of slavery* in America, (however the uncultivated state of our country, or other specious arguments may plead for it,) a *practice founded in injustice and cruelty*, and highly dangerous to our liberties, (as well as lives,) *debasing part of our fellow creatures below men*, and is laying the basis of that liberty we contend for, (and which we pray the Almighty to continue to the latest posterity,) upon a VERY WRONG FOUNDATION. We therefore resolve at all times to use our utmost endeavors for *the manumission of our slaves* in this colony, upon the most safe and equitable footing for the master and themselves."

That a sad change for the worse has taken place in public sentiment in Georgia, and the other slave States, since those days, needs no further proof.

That the sentiments of the fathers continued to prevail even in the south until a comparatively recent period, will be clearly seen from the following, (Sermon of Dr. S., p. 47,) which shows at the same time that the *Church* led the State in this matter:

"In proof of the point that the Church led the State in the change of views on the merits of the system of slavery, may be cited an article from the *New Orleans True Witness*, a religious paper, edited by Rev. R. M'Innis, a Presbyterian clergyman, a native Mississippian, who has the means of knowing whereof he affirms. It is under date of August 18, 1860. It may be added, also, that the Synod of Mississippi officially declare the same thing stated in this article, as to the leading responsibility of this change. The editor remarks as follows:

"'SMYLIE ON SLAVERY.—It is an interesting historical fact, that Rev. James

Smylie, an old-school Presbyterian minister, was the first person in our country who took boldly the position that slavery was not inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible. He was one of the first Presbyterian ministers who came to the south-west, and assisted in forming the Mississippi Presbytery in 1818. The general view held at this time and for many years after, south as well as north, was that slavery was an evil. The question had not been examined. All took it for granted that slavery was an evil, and inconsistent with the spirit and teachings of the word of God. Hence the sentiments expressed by our church in 1818—which, by the way, has been most shamefully garbled and misrepresented—were at the time the sentiments of the whole country, and was regarded as a pretty strong southern document, hence all the south voted for it. In fact, so strong was the feeling for emancipation, that this act of 1818 discouraged it in our members where the slaves were not prepared for it, while it condemned the "harsh censures and uncharitable reflections" of the more ultra men of the north. We have referred to this merely to call attention to the fact that the opinion of the whole country was that slavery was an evil. And we know of no man who took a different position, until Rev. James Smylie, in answer to a letter addressed to him as stated clerk of the above Presbytery, wrote a reply in which he attempted to show that neither the Old nor the New Testament Scriptures declared slavery to be a sin, but both recognized it as an institution belonging to the great social system. This letter, which has long since been published in a pamphlet of some eighty pages, small type, was not only the first, but it is in our view the ablest and most convincing scriptural argument ever published on the subject. It shows research, ability, honesty, and is unanswerable. When the substance of this letter was delivered in 1835 and '36 in the churches of Mississippi, in the form of a sermon, the people generally, large slaveholders too, did not sympathize with him in his views. We recollect hearing him on one occasion for some three hours, and every person, without exception, thought him somewhat fanatical. The idea that the Bible did sanction slavery was regarded as a new doctrine even in Mississippi. Yet Rev. James Smylie—and a more honest man never lived—was honestly sincere in his convictions and his views, and he went ahead against the tide of public opinion. His scriptural argument has never been answered, nor can it be. This letter was the first thing that turned public attention in the south, and especially in the south-west, to the investigation of the subject: and every scriptural argument we have seen is but a reproduction of this, while none is so clear, full and unanswerable. It ought to be republished.

"'Some two years after the publication of this letter, George M'Duffie, a senator of South Carolina, announced similar views in Congress, and was regarded there as taking a strange and untenable position—one which met with little sympathy in that body. The fact is, the south had never examined the subject, and were finally driven to it by the intolerant fanaticism of ultra men at the north.

"'We mention the above facts not to provoke discussion, but merely to show the state of public opinion at the time on the subject of slavery; and to show that the south is indebted to a minister of our church for the first clear and unanswerable argument against the generally admitted view that slavery was *a sin*.'"

From all which it further appears that the southern head was enlightened some time before the southern heart was fired. The people of the south were no wiser than other people in regard to the nature of slavery, but were regarding it as *an evil*—A SIN, till the Rev. James Smylie arose, and he "changed all that."

NOTE E. Page 18.

Since this sermon was delivered the President has sent forth his Emancipation Proclamation, which adds greatly to the dream-like aspect of "the union as it was;" but renders much more hopeful "the union as it was meant to be."

NOTE F. Page 19.

This passage has been greatly misrepresented, as though the author was in favor of servile insurrection, &c.

It will be seen that instead of this, he regards the arming of the slaves in the manner proposed as the best, and in some places the only means of *preventing* servile insurrection. Others may view the matter differently; but this is *his* opinion, deliberately formed and confidently retained. He thinks that those assume a fearful responsibility who would suppress and stifle the dreaded vengeance of an oppressed people, instead of giving it vent in a safe and legitimate way—a way in which it could be kept under control and rendered auxiliary in putting down this most wicked rebellion. Without such vent, an outbreak, uncontrolled, and for the time uncontrollable, seems to the author to be, sooner or later, inevitable.

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